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THE THREAT TO OUR REVOLUTION'

Nicaragua Makes Its Case

These remarks of Sergio Ramírez Mercado, one of the three members of the governing junta of Nicaragua, were delivered to an assembly of Latin American intellectuals in Managua on March 4, two weeks before the government declared a "state of emergency." They were translated for The Nation by Darwin J. Flakoll, author of a book on the Sandinist revolution, who is now living in Nicaragua.

SERGIO RAMÍREZ MERCADO

During the past months we in Nicaragua have witnessed an increasing number of actions and threats endangering our country and our revolution. It is not only imperial rhetoric that is being used against Nicaragua; terrorism, military preparations, the intimidation of our neighbors and the most aggressive political weapons such as blackmail and sabotage are also being employed. We can enumerate a series of events in the past few weeks alone that enable us to clarify this menacing picture.

§ The creation of the so-called "Democratic Community" of Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, a North American maneuver to legitimate the use of an intervention force in the Central American area, linked to the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance. More recently, this "community" has been joined by the United States; Colombia, which has also authorized the establishment of Yankee military bases; and Guatemala. The intent to establish a political and military wall around Nicaragua is clear-cut.

§ The establishment of U.S. military bases on the island of Amapala in the Gulf of Fonseca and on San Andrés island in the Caribbean, both of them within the continental shelf waters of Nicaragua. These naval and air bases are designed to involve Nicaragua militarily along both its coasts.

§ The presence of North American warships, equipped with the most sophisticated communications apparatus, in the waters of the Gulf of Fonseca, an operation which the president of the Salvadoran junta, José Napoleón Duarte, admits having authorized.

§ The supply of money, training and arms to the bands of former Somoza National Guardsmen operating from Honduran territory, as part of a clandestine operation run by the Central Intelligence Agency. The existence of this operation was admitted by the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders, before the intelligence committees of both houses of the U.S. Congress during the course of a secret session held last December.

In addition, President Reagan's ambassador at large,

retired Gen. Ver...
preparations thr...
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National Guardsmen and to infiltrate Nicaraguan territories as mercenaries.

As a consequence of all this terrorist activity, bands of former National Guardsmen, in alliance with Steadman Fagoth, a former Somoza security agent, were able this past December and January to organize their "Red Christmas" operation, which destroyed indigenous communities along the Coco River between Nicaragua and Honduras and created a beachhead in Nicaraguan territory. Before the revolutionary government re-established absolute control of the zone, Red Christmas resulted in the murder of nearly sixty Nicaraguans, including civilians and members of our frontier guards, army troops and security forces. Red Christmas also provoked the forced exodus of a considerable number of the indigenous communities into Honduras. National Guardsmen tortured and raped residents of the communities as well as local medical personnel.

The revolutionary government was forced to relocate the riverside communities in more secure areas of the national territory, where our Miskito brethren will have, for the first time, access to systematic medical assistance, education, adequate housing, electricity and cultivable land. This relocation has given rise to a ferocious, slanderous campaign of lies mounted by the C.I.A. and the State Department against our revolution.

State security organs of the Ministry of Interior have uncovered a plot, mounted in Costa Rica, Honduras and the United States, to blow up Nicaragua's national cement factory and petroleum refinery. Huge quantities of explosives were smuggled into the country for this purpose. One of the principals implicated in the plot confessed that he had received \$50,000 from officials of the Argentine general staff and had learned that a special Argentine commando unit was to be located in Tegucigalpa to direct sabotage operations against Nicaragua.

A commercial airplane of Aeronica, the Nicaraguan national airline, was blown up in the airport of Mexico City by a time bomb that was supposed to have destroyed the plane in midflight, killing its 100 passengers.

A suitcase containing explosives blew up in the Sandino Airport terminal, killing three baggage handlers. The suitcase had been placed aboard a plane in Tegucigalpa, and this act of terrorism was designed to force cancellation of the visit of President José López Portillo of Mexico to

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THE WASHINGTON POST
26 March 1982

Diplomacy Up, But Optimism On Result Is Not

By Don Oberdorfer
Washington Post Staff Writer

This weekend's elections in El Salvador will open a period of intensive diplomacy on several fronts to explore negotiated solutions for the deepening problems of Central America. But there is little optimism here that these efforts will succeed.

Two sets of negotiations between the United States and Cuba and the United States and Nicaragua—are described by informed officials as nearly certain to take place in the weeks ahead. The United States is working on ideas and suggestions for a third set of talks, involving a newly elected civilian leadership in El Salvador and that country's insurgent left, but there is much less confidence that this dialogue will take place.

A flurry of diplomatic maneuvering, public and private, in recent weeks has set the stage for the talks. The most public of the maneuvers, the "Mexican initiative" announced by President Jose Lopez Portillo Feb. 21, was the subject of meetings between Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. and Foreign Minister Jorge Castaneda on March 6 and 14, and exploratory trips by Castaneda to Havana and Managua within the past week.

A confidential effort, until news of it leaked in the past several days, was a visit to Havana in early March by Gen. Vernon Walters, Haig's roving ambassador and secret emissary. While not officially confirming the Walters mission, apparently because of a U.S.-Cuban agreement not to do so, an informed U.S. official placed it in the category of periodic tests of Cuban intentions in a secret dialogue dating back to 1977.

There is no indication at present, according to this official, that a "grand negotiation" is likely to lead to a rapprochement with Havana. As in the past, Cuba is described as eager to discuss such bilateral issues as the U.S. trade embargo, the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay and the upgrading of diplomatic relations, but reluctant to address the principal U.S. issues, such as Cuban aid for insurgency in the hemisphere and Cuban troops in Africa.

The issues on the two sides have been set forth in various ways, including an unannounced meeting in Mexico City last Nov. 23 between Haig and Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. Beyond this, a "disconnect" is reported between the U.S. and Cuban viewpoints while the two sides probe for further details of each other's positions.

The forthcoming diplomatic efforts can be seen as a series of concentric circles in Central America, with Cuba on the outer ring, Nicaragua on the second ring and El Salvador at the core.

The dialogue with Nicaragua began with a visit to Managua last August by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders. But this effort collapsed in October amid mutual recriminations, and tensions between Washington and Managua have risen sharply. Recently, The Washington Post and other news organizations reported that the Reagan administration has authorized secret paramilitary operations against the Nicaraguan regime.

The essential U.S. condition for a rapprochement, as stated by Enders to Nicaraguan junta coordinator Daniel Ortega in writing Aug. 31, is halting "the continued use of Nicaraguan territory to support and funnel arms to insurgent movements in the area," especially El Salvador. This remains the central issue, but there is no certainty in Washington, according to a senior U.S. official, that Nicaragua sees the question as "bargainable."

Some Nicaraguan officials continue to deny officially that their territory is being used to support the Salvadoran guerrillas. In view of this, Enders reportedly told Nicaraguan leaders last year, and U.S. officials have repeated since, that only the fact of their shutdown of support is required, not a public statement. If such action were taken, the Nicaraguans reportedly were told, the United States soon would be aware of it, a reference to U.S. intelligence monitoring.

In another aspect of a potential settlement, the United States has proposed that Nicaragua and all other countries in Central America agree not to import "heavy offensive weapons" and to reduce the number of foreign military and security advisers. Managua's acquisition of Soviet Mig fighters, which has been forecast by U.S. officials for months and is still expected, would be a major setback to the chances for a negotiated arrangement as well as a powerful symbol of a Nicaraguan connection with the Soviet bloc.

Cuban President Fidel Castro, according to a report that has reinforced the concern at high levels of the U.S. government, recently described the Migs as "on the way" to Nicaragua. Officials now do not believe the warplanes will be shipped to Managua through Cuba, however, but will take another route.

Internal negotiations between government leaders in El Salvador and that country's insurgent left are even more delicate, in the U.S. view, than the prospective Washington-Havana and Washington-Managua talks, and the question of internal Salvadoran discussions is being handled with even greater circumspection.

Starting with Haig, various officials of the State Department denied in a variety of ways yesterday that the administration is shifting its position on this issue.

Haig, after a meeting with the foreign ministers of El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica, said the United States from the outset has favored negotiations by all parties "to participate in a democratic process."

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NEW YORK TIMES
26 MARCH 1982

Diplomats Say Havana Wants Wide U.S. Talks

By ALAN RIDING

Special to The New York Times

MEXICO CITY, March 25 — Cuba is ready to discuss all aspects of the situation in the Caribbean basin with the Reagan Administration, diplomatic sources said today, but it will not withdraw support for Salvadoran rebels as a condition for such negotiations.

The sources said that was the essence of the message delivered last weekend by President Fidel Castro through Mexico's Foreign Minister, Jorge Castañeda de la Rosa, to a special State Department envoy, Gen. Vernon A. Walters, who had held a secret four-hour meeting with the Cuban leader early this month in Havana.

The sources added that Mr. Castro was pleased by his meeting with General Walters, who is a former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and was hopeful that it would be followed by further negotiations with the Reagan Administration.

"The Cubans say that no arms have gone from Cuba to El Salvador for the past 14 months, but they can't assume an obligation to stop aiding the guerrillas if this problem is seen in isolation," a knowledgeable Western diplomat said. "They argue that the situation would be different if the United States stopped arming the Salvadoran junta or peace talks began in El Salvador."

The sources said that, while the Cuban presence in Africa and the United States economic blockade of Cuba were not discussed by Mr. Castro and General Walters, Havana clearly preferred negotiations with Washington that covered the entire relationship between the two nations.

The sources added that Mr. Castañeda, during a two-day visit to Havana last weekend, conveyed a message from Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. that Washington still gave top priority to an end to Cuban "involvement" in El Salvador and elsewhere in

Central and South America.

Mr. Castañeda has refused to discuss the details of his talks in Havana, but he said in an interview today that he was hopeful of some reconciliation between the United States and Cuba as part of a reduction of tensions in the area.

"It won't be quick, but I think it's advancing," he said, adding that Mexico did not aspire to mediate between the two Governments.

Last month President José López Portillo of Mexico suggested that his nation serve as a "communicator" to promote negotiations between the Reagan Administration and the leftist regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua and also between El Salvador's warring factions. Mr. López Portillo has said United States talks with Cuba would facilitate solutions to the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan problems.

After his weekend talks in Havana, Mr. Castañeda paid a four-hour visit to Managua and came away with Nicaragua's agreement to a United States suggestion that the two Governments hold direct negotiations. The talks are expected to be held in Mexico City early next month.

'Other Irons in the Fire'

"The United States has reached the intelligent conclusion that its best interests are served by reaching some understanding with Nicaragua," Mr. Castañeda said today. But he added, apparently alluding to Nicaragua's fears of United States intervention, that "the U.S. willingness to negotiate does not discount the possibility that it is keeping other options open, other irons in the fire."

The Mexican Foreign Minister said Nicaragua had expressed interest in Mexico's participation in the negotiations with Washington, "although I suspect the United States would prefer us not to be there."

"Mexico's role is limited," he added. "We want to be a communicator and not a mediator."

Mr. Castañeda noted that both the United States and Nicaragua have already made proposals for negotiations with each other. "We don't think there's enormous difference between the two positions, and we don't think they should have great difficulty in reaching an arrangement," he said.

Optimistic on Salvadoran Talks

Questioned about the status of proposed negotiations between warring forces in El Salvador, the Foreign Minister said he was encouraged by press reports from Washington that the Reagan Administration had accepted the idea of talks between the Salvadoran opposition and the new Government that emerges from Sunday's elections there. "I hope it is true," he said. "I hope this is confirmed."

He recalled that he had agreed to meet Mr. Haig again in April to discuss El Salvador.

Diplomatic sources said that, while Mexico opened its current regional peace initiative on its own, France is reportedly interested in renewing its cooperation with the López Portillo administration on problems of Central America.

In August Mexico and France stirred controversy by jointly recognizing El Salvador's guerrilla-led opposition as a "representative political force" in the conflict. The sources said they were unsure what new ideas France was elaborating. They added that Régis Debray, a foreign affairs adviser to President François Mitterrand, was planning to visit Mexico City this weekend.